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Jimmy the 4-H Reporter : Extension Circular 0-32-2

Cal Orr

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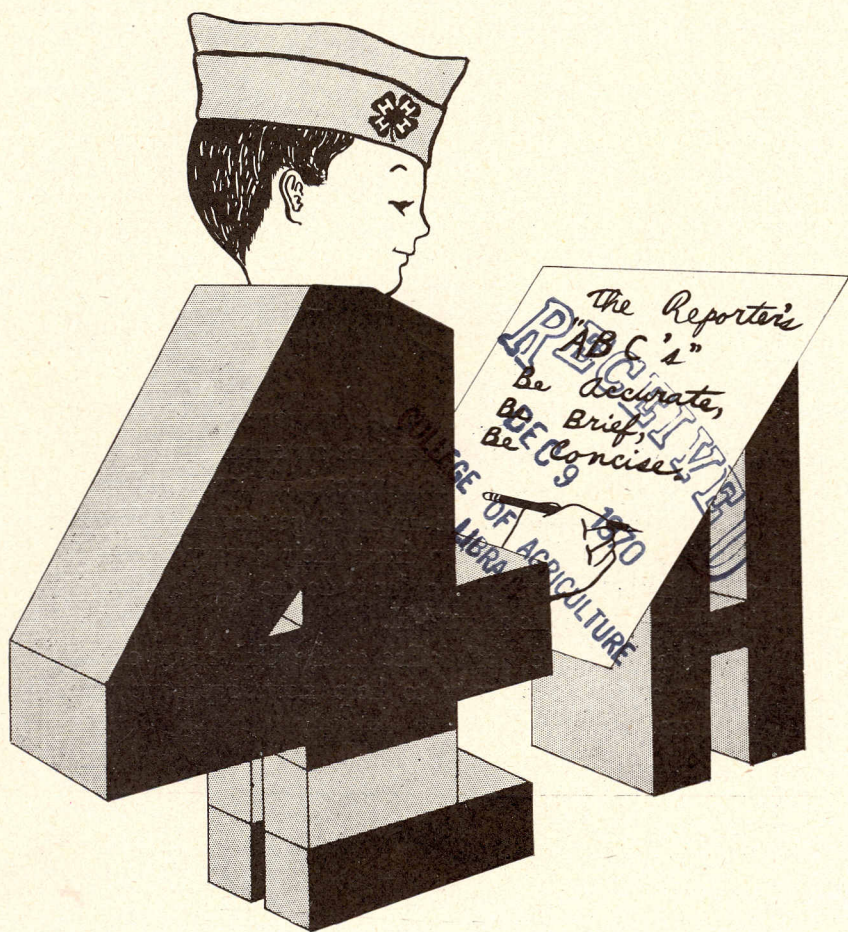
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FEBRUARY 1950

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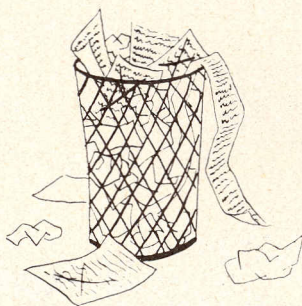
Jimmy the 4-H news reporter



COOPERATIVE EXTENSION WORK IN AGRICULTURE AND HOME ECONOMICS.
UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE, AND THE UNITED
STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE COOPERATING, H.G. GOULD, ASSOCIATE
DIRECTOR, LINCOLN.

A Few Pointers . . .

This booklet presents a few pointers on how 4-H club news reporters may avoid the editor's round file with their copy.



It's a story of Jimmy, a boy with average writing ability, and how he was able to convince an editor that he can present a story about his club in readable form.

Club news reporters are urged to get acquainted with their editors and get help from their county extension agents and club leaders in order to do the best job possible in telling the public about 4-H.

The extension editor's office at the University of Nebraska also stands ready to help news reporters with problems.

Jimmy, the 4-H News Reporter

CAL ORR

THE ART OF NEWS WRITING lies in simpleness, clearness, interest and accuracy.

Jimmy was elected news reporter when his Jolly Juniors 4-H club was reorganized. He was scared. He hadn't done any writing before.

Oh, sure, Jimmy got fair grades in English at school. And he wrote a few compositions. But he was afraid. When I write a story for the papers, he thought, somebody besides my teacher is going to read it.

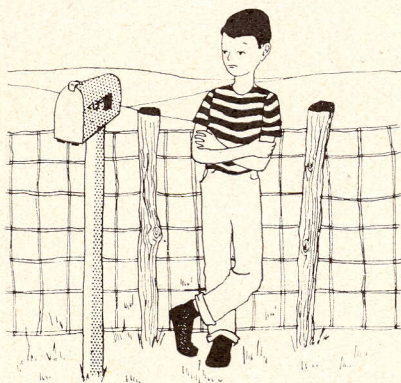
Besides, he told his leader, Joe Brown, "I don't like to write."

"Well," Mr. Brown said, "the kids thought you could do the best job; that's why they elected you. Why don't you try it for a little while, anyway."

So Jimmy went to work and wrote up the club meeting. It came out this way:

The Jolly Juniors met last Tuesday at the home of our leader. It was a good meeting and everybody had a good time and Mrs. Brown served delicious ice cream and cake. Mr. Brown told us it was time to reorganize the club.

So we reorganized the club and I was elected your reporter. John Riley was elected



president of the club. Marjorie Wyman was elected vice president and Duane Jacobs was elected secretary-treasurer.

Our record books on which we keep figures on our beef projects were given to us by Mr. Brown. He told us the books are important because they help us to remember what we have fed our project and how much profit we may make.

We are going to look for beeves next week.

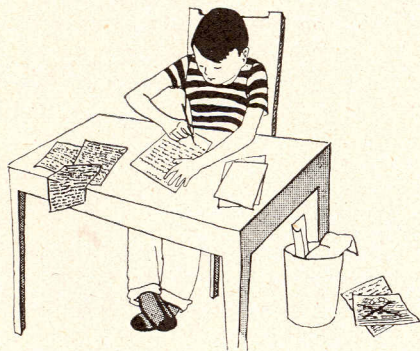
Jimmy took the news story to the community weekly newspaper, The Paris Telegraph. The 4-H clubber put it on the office counter and went home.

He waited anxiously for Thursday to come. The Paris Telegraph would be out then and he would see his first writing in print. He felt better now.

"I did a good job," he thought. "I got everything I could think of in the news story."

Suspense

Thursday came. The Paris Telegraph was in the mailbox. Jimmy hastily looked over the pages. He couldn't find his news story. It wasn't on the front page. It wasn't even in the section devoted to 4-H club news.



Jimmy was sad. He didn't eat much dinner. His mother was worried, thinking her boy was ill. "What's the matter, Jimmy?" she asked.

Jimmy told her his news story didn't get in *The Paris Telegraph*. "Maybe the editor didn't see your story," suggested his mother.

"He must have seen it," declared Jimmy. "I put it on the counter in his office with a lot of other news that people brought in."

Well, the next club meeting rolled around. The club president asked Jimmy why the news story of their last meeting didn't get in the paper. The other members were a bit annoyed with Jimmy. Jimmy told them what had happened.

"Why don't you write a story about this meeting," the club leader, Mr. Brown, suggested, "and take it directly to the editor and find out why he didn't print the last one. Maybe he can give you some pointers on what he wants in a news story."

Jimmy Meets the Editor

So Jimmy called Mr. Joyce, the editor, and made an appointment to see him the next day.



"Yes, I did see your story, Jimmy," said Mr. Joyce when they met in the editor's office. "You know I'm very much interested in 4-H clubs and I want to do everything I can to help them along."

The editor continued: "But you brought your story in too late and I didn't have time to rewrite it. You see, Jimmy, I want everything that goes into my paper written in news style. That makes the paper easier to read and I can clip the story off anywhere and still have a complete story told."

"Clip a story off after the first paragraph and still tell what happened at a 4-H club meeting? How can that be done?" asked Jimmy.

Important Facts First

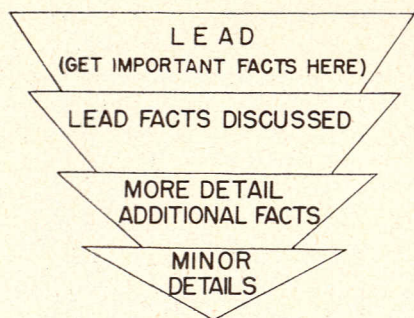
"It's the most simple thing in the world," said the editor. "All you have to do is put the most important things that happened at your meeting at the top or lead of the story."

He brought Jimmy's story out of the pile of paper on his desk. Mr. Joyce was saving Jimmy's story for such an opportunity to discuss it with him. He thought the 4-H'er had real talent for writing.

"Now, Jimmy," Mr. Joyce said, "you did a good job in getting all the facts about your meeting. But you took too long to tell about them. Now, you help me and we'll rewrite your story. What do you think were the most important things that happened at your meeting?"

"Well," said Jimmy, "probably the election of officers and the reorganization of the club."

"That's probably right," said Mr. Joyce. "But you waited until the second paragraph to tell about that. Now, let's put down first the most important thing that happened. But wait, we've



got to do more than that. Who is the most important officer in your club?"

"I suppose the president is," said Jimmy.

"Well, let's say the Riley boy was elected president, then. Remember, people that read your story weren't at the meeting and don't know very much about your club and they're interested in who the members are. Now let's get all the main things in the upper part of your story. We have the election of the president, but other things important to make a complete story are where the meeting was held and when. Now we're ready to write the lead of your story like this":

John Riley was elected president of the Jolly Juniors 4-H Baby Beef Club at the group's recent reorganization meeting in the home of Joe Brown, the leader.

Spell that Name Right

"Wait a minute," said Mr. Joyce. "Another very important thing in news writing is to be sure names are spelled right. You're talking about the president of your club. I know that name's not spelled correctly. Instead of John Riley, it's Jon Reilly. Got to be careful about that. There are few things as insulting to a person as spelling his name incorrectly. And be sure to use first names or initials, because there might be several people with the same last name in your community.

"Now, here you did it again. The Jacobs boy spells his first name DuWayne instead of Duane and the Wyman girl has two n's in her name. Better watch that next time. Just think how many ways there are to spell the first name of the Jacobs boy and they're all used. Let's see, there's Duane—the way you spelled it; DuWayne, Dwain, Dwaine, Duwayne, DuWaine and probably a few others. Always ask a person how to spell his name, even if it's a simple one like John, Pete or Jim.

"Now," said Mr. Joyce, "you have the main things in your first paragraph. Let's get on to the next paragraph. The other officers are important, too. Let's put them down in order, like this":

Other officers elected are Marjorie Wyman, vice president; DuWayne Jacobs, secretary-treasurer; and Jimmy Johnson, news reporter.

"You have all the things necessary in those two paragraphs to make a good news story," said Mr. Joyce. "You don't need any more. But you may add additional details if you wish, and if there is room in the paper they will be used. You might add to the story like this":

The 4-H'ers made plans to look for their calf projects next week. They received record books in which they will keep an account of their projects' progress.

Refreshments were served by Mrs. Brown. Other members of the club are Jack Bradley, Joe Gibbons, Frank Humphrey, Johnny Graham, Jim Jones and Joy Claasen.

Stick to Facts

"You've noted," said the editor, "that we have written your news story in the third person—instead of using the 'I and we' approach. That's important in a news story."

"You mean," said Jimmy, "a news reporter doesn't give his own ideas on the meeting?"

"That's right," answered Mr. Joyce. "The best story is objective reporting.

Leave out the adjectives and adverbs, don't use too many conjunctions, and stick to facts. You'll have a better news story. Of course some news stories must be written in first person. In that case the reporter gets a by-line, or his name is signed to the article. But that would be very rare in a 4-H club news story."

"That story sure looks good now," said Jimmy, "but what about this story on our last meeting. We met in the same place, but we didn't elect officers. All we did was make plans for the rest of the year."

"Well, aren't those plans important?" asked Mr. Joyce.

"I guess so," said Jimmy, "but what can you say about plans?"

"Let's write your story right now, and I'll show you," said Mr. Joyce. "I'll just take your story here the way you have written it and rearrange it a bit."

This is what Mr. Joyce wrote from information Jimmy supplied:

Tours, baseball games and demonstrations are included on the program for the Jolly Juniors 4-H Baby Beef Club this summer.

The ten-member club made plans Tuesday night at the home of its leader, Joe Brown. The clubbers selected their beeves last week and plan to exhibit their projects at the county fair and enter judging and showmanship contests. Baseball games will be scheduled with other 4-H clubs in the community, according to Mr. Brown.

Mr. Joyce told Jimmy to look over the story. "Is there anything left out that you consider important?" he asked.

"No," said Jimmy. "That looks easy. I've got a lot of ideas for other stories now."

"Always remember this," cautioned Mr. Joyce. "Make each sentence a clear-cut statement of fact, but don't use a lot of adjectives. Get the more interesting facts in the first two paragraphs

and the most important facts in the first paragraph.

"Be sure the story has the full name of everybody concerned, with the correct spelling. Make sure the story is told in the third person. Write the story with all the important facts first so the editor can cut off the story anywhere."

So Jimmy's 4-H club, the Jolly Juniors, became one of the best known organizations in the community. Jimmy wrote brief, snappy news stories about his club's activities—after each meeting and special event.

Folks began to look for the item about the Jolly Juniors in the weekly newspaper. Here are some examples of Jimmy's writing on these occasions:

The Jolly Juniors 4-H Baby Beef Club took a glimpse this week of what its competition will be at the Adams county fair.

Club members toured the southern part of the county with their leader, Joe Brown, to view the baby beef projects of other club members. Farms visited included those of Jake Spidel, John Cummings, Gerald Lamb and Jack Carson.

It was a happy day when the Jolly Juniors took on the baseball team of another club in a hotly contested game. The Jolly Juniors won. This is what Jimmy wrote for the Paris Telegraph: (He read other sports stories first.)

The Jolly Juniors 4-H Baby Beef Club trounced the Frisky Critters organization at North Bend Tuesday in a closely contested baseball game. The score was 6-3.

Jolly Juniors' Jon Reilly, on the mound during the entire game, allowed only nine hits. Jack Schmidt, Frisky Critters pitcher, gave the Jolly Juniors 15 hits.

The Jolly Juniors went out ahead in the first inning when Jim Jones, 15-year-old outfielder, hit a home run with the bases loaded. From then on, the Juniors were never headed.

The Frisky Critters made their three runs in the second inning on two walks and two hits.

DuWayne Jacobs led the Juniors in hitting, getting three hits in six times at bat.

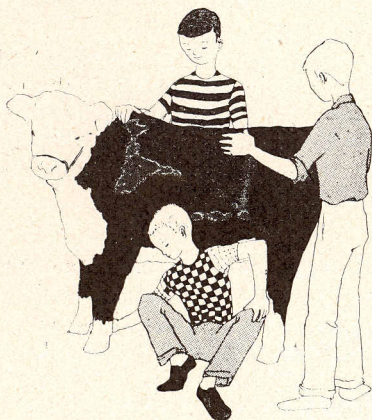
What to Write About

There are a lot of other things a 4-H reporter may write about and keep his group well known. Here are some suggestions:

Don't forget the unusual things about your club. These are the items that make the most interesting story.

Maybe you have a club made up of boys, all enrolled in a cooking project.

Maybe you have a club member who has had success in feeding his calf in an unusual way.



Maybe members of your club have an unusual way of demonstrating.

Your leader is an interesting person. Get to know him better. There may be a good story about him.

As far as meetings are concerned, you can write at **least two stories** about each one—before the club meeting, giving notice that your group is going to meet, and afterward a story about **what happened at the meeting.**

When you have a speaker at a meeting, you're the only outlet for telling others what he said. His remarks may be of **major importance.** If so tell what the speaker said. Don't worry too much about the rest of the club meeting in your story.

If you have a demonstration at a meeting, tell **what the demonstration is about and its purpose.**

Besides meetings, don't forget other things in which your club participates . . . like picnics, tours, exhibits, baseball games, judging days, demonstration days, conferences with other groups, and camps. These are the activities that make for a busy summer in the clubber's life.

When fall comes you have a host of things to tell about if your club is an active one. **Programs presented by your club, donations made by your group, or perhaps donations to your club, contest winners in all kinds of projects—conservation, health, sewing, painting, and all the others.** And another good story is your club's part in community projects.

When winter rolls around you have your **reorganization meetings** to write about. With a lead off about your club reorganizing, you have an endless supply of material from which to write stories.

Here are examples: 1. Election of officers. 2. Selection of projects for next year. 3. Additional plans for next year. 4. Tours of projects by members. 5. Parties in which your club participates. 6. Pen-pal activities. (This can develop into several good stories, especially if the one with whom you are corresponding lives in a foreign country.) 7. Basketball games and other kinds of sports where competition is between clubs.

And you can think of many other things that will justify a news story. If the stories are well written the editor will be glad to get them.

Remember These Rules

Just remember a few simple rules and your story will be acceptable to the editor. Your main guide in writing a



story is what newspapermen call the four W's, the H and the W—Who? What? When? Where? How? and Why?

Just ask yourself these questions and answer them on paper. Then ask yourself which of these is the most important and interesting fact about the event. Answer that question in the lead of your story.

Modern newspaper writing has gotten away from the old idea that it's necessary to answer all of the six questions in the first sentence. It makes a sentence too long and too hard to understand.

Make your sentences short and answer most of the questions in the first part of the story.

Remember to credit the story to someone of authority. Leave out your

opinion. You're liable to get yourself out on a limb if you don't.

Here are a few phrases that may help you credit a statement:

he said	according to
he declared	he pointed out
he observed	he suggested
he commented	he emphasized
he believes	

You also want to be sure that your story is in a form that's acceptable to the editor. Here are a few suggestions:

1. Use a typewriter if available.
2. Double space so it's easier for the editor to correct mistakes.
3. Put your name, address and telephone number at the top of the page so the editor may get in touch with you if he has any questions.
4. Write or type neatly on only one side of the sheet.
5. Write short paragraphs.
6. Don't put a headline on your story. The editor will write the headline.
7. Write short stories, making each paragraph complete in itself so the editor can clip the story to fit his pages if it's too long.

ABOVE ALL, DON'T IRRITATE THE EDITOR BY SENDING IN YOUR COPY TOO LATE.

Keep a calendar of events. Place your stories with the editor well before the event happens and immediately after it happens—not more than a day later. Don't let the story get stale.